

**Central Falls School District
Board of Trustees
Minutes**

May 8, 2007

I. Call to Order:

Chairperson, Ms. Anna Cano-Morales, called the Central Falls School District Board of Trustees Meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Present were: Ms. Anna Cano-Morales, Chairperson

Mr. Angelo Garcia, Vice-Chairperson

Ms. Mary Lou Perez, clerk

Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado

Ms. Sonia Rodrigues

Arrived late: Mr. David Cruise

Mr. Jhomphy Ventura.

Mrs. Cano-Morales opened up the meeting with communications:

II. Citation:

Ms. Cano-Morales said that it is an honor to give Ms. Karen Langellier a Citation. Ms. Langellier has been awarded a certificate for making a difference in her 3rd graders educational lives. Superintendent Fran Gallo and Feinstein's Principal, Ms. Maureen Azar signed this citation.

Ms. Cano-Morales congratulated Ms. Langellier for the dedication, the passion for education and learning, for the fact that Karen takes her career so highly and seriously. Ms. Cano-Morales said that Karen inspire us all to do what we do every day.

III. Communications:

Kids from the Canyon: A group of students who attended the Canyon trip during the Spring Vacation, brought pictures from the trip to show the Board members. They also talked about all the experiences they had during this trip. Words they use to describe this trip were: Wow, Beautiful and Sweet.

IV . Public Comments:

Ms. Connie Dube made some comments and they were as follows:

a. Ms. Dube congratulated Mr. Donald Blais for all he has done for the kids, specially the Grand Canyon trip.

b. Ms. Dube made a comment regarding the setup of the tables where the Board members sat. Ms. Dube said that the Board might think that the setup of the tables might not be offensive, but it is. It is a bad

choice. The public will like to see the Board members faces when they are speaking.

c. Ms. Dube asked why the schedule of bills was not in the agenda packet. Ms. Cano-Morales said that the Board has a sub-committee run by Mr. Ventura and Mr. Cruise to go over the bills before the Board meeting. Ms. Dube said that the bills are public. Ms. Cano-Morales asked Mr. Robinson and that they are going to look into this matter.

Dr. Gallo said that the purpose of the change was to try to have eye contact with all the Board members. This is a meeting where the school committee is speaking to each other. We do want to have the chairs around so that way the whole audience can participate. There will be more changes until we find a perfect setup. Dr. Gallo also mentioned that the meeting is basically among the Board of Trustees and the superintendent.

V. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Mary Lou Perez mentioned that there were some typos on page 3, where it says: a lot of attention has been paid on CF; it should say attention has been placed.

Ms. Mary Lou Perez motioned to approve the minutes, including the executive session minutes of April 10, 2007. The motion was seconded by Sonia Rodrigues and unanimously approved by the Board.

VI. Reports

a. Administrative:

• UCAP Partnership Expansion

Dr. Gallo mentioned that she has been keeping the school alert of the sense of change that needs to happen at Jump Start Academy. Dr. Gallo said, that they have met with several different partners and with the union teachers to ask for some changes that will really help make the school a true alternative school. Dr. Gallo said that they have also approached Mr. Rob DeBlois from UCAP to look at the kinds of opportunities that UCAP can offer by expanding from a middle school to a high school in a true alternative setting. Dr. Gallo also mentioned that on her weekly updates, she outlined the times and things that they are looking for in what Dr. Gallo categorized the marking of the Jump Start Academy opportunity and after meeting with the leadership of the teachers union yesterday, they were able to come up with several opportunities for change and they were as follows:

a. Jump Start Academy will definitely be considered a stand-alone academy no longer a part of the high school but a true separate entity.

b. Because it will be a true separate entity, it will be entitle to have its own school improving team and in that sense, they will begin their own governing.

c. They will be able to hold regular faculty meetings.

d. Also, we agreed that it will be an application school because we are truly looking to have children there just because they want to be there not because they were forced to be out of another facility. The sense

is that they understand that they are older than other students, that they are having academic problems in school and that this is the place that we can promise them more individualized attention and opportunity to move forward.

e. We will like to give them an application school where parents too come with an agreement to be real partners with the school and to come forward at least four times during the year to conference with teachers.

f. We are also working in some sort of memorandum that states correctly that the schedule being handing out at the job fair will simply be a schedule that says: teacher at Jump Start Mathematics not a period by period class. If the teachers feel that after six or eight weeks into the program they feel that they should change the course from A to B or vise versa, they will be able to do it.

b. Chairperson

Ms. Cano-Morales mentioned that she walks around with articles that she gathers from the newspaper about our district. Ms. Cano-Morales is very proud of the media coverage that we got since the last four meetings. Ms. Tatiana Pina did a wonderful job portraying the leadership that Dr. Bill Holland did here in the district. Ms. Pina also did a very nice job at capturing the essence of what the URI and high school partnership hopefully will be. In addition, Providence Journal had a letter from the editor sent by Dr. Holland in reaction to the House of Finance Committee testimony that we all attended probably three weeks ago. Again in the local section of the same paper, one of our students was mention as a recipient of the Jackie Robinson

award. Ms. Cano-Morales said that she is very proud of the district, very proud of Ella Risk in reading week. She thanked Mr. Dan Davis, for reaching out and involving us in this activity. Also, Ms. Cano-Morales congratulated Calcutt Middle School for reaching a moderate performing status.

c. Other:

Ms. Mary Lou Perez mentioned that she attended the Special Olympics. It was very special and I am proud to have attended this event.

Ms. Sonia Rodrigues gave an update on the Health and Wellness program. Ms. Rodrigues said that they just had their third meeting and that they have a draft policy that will be out in the next couple of weeks. She said that the plan is to have it out to the Board by the next Board meeting in June.

The Board requested a calendar for all the events at the schools. Patty will be forwarding a copy of this calendar to all the Board members.

VII. Personnel Matters:

The following district employees have submitted their resignations:
Frank Knott – Supervisor Buildings, Grounds and Transportation –
Effective 6-01-07

Janice Mann – Technology Help Desk – Effective 4-11-07

Shirley Rodriguez – Secretary at Calcutt Middle School – Effective

4-12-07

Joanne Greenleaf – science teacher at Jump Start Academy has requested an extension

On her personal leave of absence to include 2007-2008.

VIII. New Business

a. Education Justice Council – Monica Teixeira

Ms. Teixeira talked about methods of reducing the number of high school dropouts. The numbers are just too high. What we are looking for are methods to reduce the number of dropouts and one of them is to change the out-of-school suspension to in-school suspension. Dropout rates are related to a variety of individual and family demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In general, dropout rates are higher for minority students and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ms. Teixeira mentioned that if we have in-school suspension we will be able to reduce current dropout rate, we will reduce the risk of school alienation, and we will maintain continuity in programming.

Ms. Teixeira mentioned that she was thrilled to discover that Central Falls has actually become the first school district in the state of RI to prohibit out-of-school suspensions. This is a huge step and we are hoping that Central Falls schools will serve as a model for other districts in the state. Ms. Teixeira finalized her speech by requesting that this new practice be put into the policy.

b. URI Partnership Agreement Recommendation for Approval

Dr. Gallo said that this is intended to be the formal document that brings URI and Central Falls together. “We are about to make history,” said Dr. Gallo. We are about to create a strong partnership that is well defined and well understood from its purpose to its vision to what we feel we have to offering the community together and how it will grow in the area of secondary education in providing the very best and that is basically what the agreement says. The agreement is between the two major entities, there is a format for other entities, for example we expect other Higher Eds to join us, and we expect private contractors to join us. We know we have a lot to do with the Central Falls teachers union.

The high school will be called “Central Falls High School: A University of Rhode Island Academy”. Dr. Gallo said that the partnership is for five years and will be reviewed yearly. The intent is that it’s long lasting. Ms. Cano-Morales said that we are going to grow together. Ms. Cano-Morales also said that we are waiting the approval of URI President Carothers, the Board of Regents and Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education. We are taking the first step, but there is couple of more steps that needs to be formalized.

President Carothers expressed enthusiasm about the partnership and hopes that the partnership would create a model for urban education in Rhode Island. President Carothers also mentioned that the Central Falls high school academy would likely have access to donations and grants. URI can help broker alliances with business, colleges and

with state and community agencies. Also the Community College of RI and RI College are also involved. RIC will offer advice in special education and social work, and CCRI in remedial education. President Carothers said that the state has committed \$250,000 to the University for the Partnership and also mentioned that it was very important for them to get a public commitment so the Board of Education is not just asking us to do the work. We have had a very positive response and very optimistic that there will be private funding. Dr. Gallo mentioned that she expects other colleges to sign on as partners.

Ms. Cano-Morales said that she would like to entertain a motion to vote for the approval of the partnership agreement between University of Rhode Island, Central Falls and the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado motioned to approve the partnership between the University of Rhode Island, Central Falls and the Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Cruise and unanimously approved by the Board.

IX. Executive Session.

Mr. David Cruise made a motioned to go into Executive Session at 7:11 p.m. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sonia Rodrigues and unanimously approved by the Board.

Ms. Ana Cano-Morales reconvened the public meeting at 7:50 p.m. The motion to reconvene the public meeting was made by Mr.

Jhomphy Ventura and seconded by Ms. Mary Lou Perez. A roll call vote was taken so it was unanimously approved.

New Business (Continuation)

Accountability Data Update by Ewa Pytowska

Central Falls School District Grades 3-8

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB

The accountability results based on the fall NECAP outcomes have arrived in the Central Office.

The news, overall, is quite good. Comments below are based on files released to the district by RIDE (see attached). Even though only two schools met ALL the targets, as a district we made significant gains. This is especially evident in the area of mathematics. I have asked the principals to approach teachers with the positive attitude of recognizing our collective strengths and rejoicing in different school's victories, small and large. Where the news is disappointing, I have asked principals to lead the teachers in looking for lessons to be learned and conversations to be had.

In mathematics, four of the five schools made AYP (annual yearly progress targets school wide, and the fifth school made it through safe harbor. Veterans and Calcutt were the furthest ahead, with

Veterans showing 8+ pts over the AMO (annual measurable objective), and Calcutt +7 pts over the AMO. If you look at the chart below, you will note that Veterans actually scored above next year's AMO in math. (The annual measurable objective is the same for all RI within a content area. It represents the minimum percentage of students who must be proficient on NECAP in mathematics or language arts).

When it comes to the disaggregated data, district wide we missed only two targets in mathematics, one for LEP students and one for the IEP students in two different schools. If we compare this number to the number of targets missed in the previous years, the disaggregated data is quite encouraging.

Another way to look at these numbers is as follows: rounding off, each of the small schools was accountable for 15 targets, the large ones and Calcutt about 25 each. Altogether, that is roughly 125 we were responsible as a district. Of those, we missed five: in three cases, students with IEPs did not make the target, and in two cases ELL students missed the target.

In the area of language arts, we did not do quite as well. Here, only one school (Veterans) met the AMO (school wide) without safe harbor. All other schools had to access the safe harbor provision. Collectively, we missed three disaggregated targets, two for students with IEPs in two elementary schools, and one for LEP students in another elementary. Another way of interpreting this data is that we

did not make headway towards 2008 NECAP in the ELA but did in mathematics.

You may want to note that in mathematics, we adopted Investigations in the elementary schools and CMP in the middle school long before we adopted a reading program. The two mathematics programs are highly compatible (both as NSF endorsed), creating a continuum of mathematics learning that begins in Kindergarten and ends in the 8th grade. Therefore, it can be said that we have maintained steady course in mathematics education for at least the past 6 years. Most researchers believe that schools need about 7 years to “turn the ship around” and the 6th yr of Investigations and CMP are likely a significant reason for strong progress.

In contrast, a number of changes in the overall district direction have been evident in the English Language Arts. Six years ago, we developed and published a district Balanced Literacy Framework K-12. In elementary grades and middle school we focused on improving flexible regrouping to better meet individual student needs.

With the help of PSI funds, we introduced a highly diverse (in terms of cultures, authors, gender representation and genre, etc.) core literature program. Teachers also developed writing exemplars in grades K-8 using our own students’ writing. The same exact writing framework and writing rubric was used across the grades.

Three years ago, a commercially published Scott Foresman

anthology was purchased for grades K-6. In addition, a number of targeted literacy intervention programs have been introduced including Read 180, SOAR to Success, Early Reading Success, Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading. The amount of change has been staggering, while professional development hardly kept pace with teacher needs. Thus one could say that consistency of instruction and programs present in mathematics has not yet materialized in the English language arts.

Two of our schools deserve a special mention. Calcutt Middle School and Veterans Elementary missed no targets. Therefore, they both earned the extraordinary designation of “Moderately Performing” schools.

Calcutt Middle School is now free of corrective action measures under Title I/NCLB. The school is free to pursue its dream of being a model urban middle school. This is a middle school where almost all of the ELA, math and science teachers meet voluntarily for monthly or biweekly professional development. Calcutt teachers themselves facilitate the three support groups, and the quality of work is remarkable. There is on-going attention paid to the pacing guides, program integration, and alignment with the GSEs.

In terms of individual student performance and in terms of annual yearly progress, Veterans is the highest performing elementary school in the district in 2007. Yet Veterans teachers approached

NECAP this fall with much apprehension. In a school where many teachers are known advocates for students with special learning needs and for English Language Learners, many hours have been devoted to discussing the ethics (or lack of) in NCLB assessment requirements. Being respectful of the teachers' concerns, we nevertheless asked them to invite the students to give the assessments their absolute best. The results speak for themselves!

It may be worthwhile to consider whether the extensive involvement of Veterans parents (PTO) in the school, and their strongly voiced dissatisfaction with last year's results, had anything to do with this remarkable set of outcomes. If you ask them, they might nod and say, "Si, si puede (yes, we can), an attitude they exemplify at the school throughout the year.

The resulting multi-year classifications of the Central Falls schools under Title I/NCLB are as follows:

- Feinstein must provide choice (first time)**
- Ella Risk must provide choice (again)**
- Veterans (notwithstanding the results) must provide choice and SES because this was the first of the two required years of improvement.**

The Rhode Island AMOs (annual measurable objectives) change every three years. Next year's AMOs are going to be as follows:

2007 Elementary ELA 80.1 Math 68.1

Next 3 years ELA 84.1 Math 74.5

2007 Middle school ELA 73.3 Math 55.1

Next 3 years ELA 78.6 Math 64.1

Therefore, we must do significantly better on our scores in both mathematics and ELA.

Diploma System Policy:

Dr. Gallo gave a brief summary of the Central Falls High School Diploma System Policy which was included in the Board packet. Attached is a copy of this policy.

Based on: The Rhode Island High School Diploma System

The Rationale: Schools must be sure that all students successfully complete a rigorous diploma program that gives them access to college or post-secondary training, whether immediately after high school or when and if they so choose.

Defining Proficiency for the RI High School Diploma System:

Proficient performance for graduation in each of the six core content academic areas is defined as the level of performance required of all students receiving a high school diploma. A general description of proficiency for graduation includes the following:

- All students will demonstrate the knowledge and applied skills needed to pursue a post-secondary education or enter the workforce in high-performing workplaces**
- All students will be college-ready, demonstrating the knowledge and skills needed to perform successfully in English Language Arts and Mathematics at a community college without need for remediation**
- All students will demonstrate the ability to actively apply their content knowledge to critique existing ideas and concepts taking into account their relation to other ideas and concepts, usefulness, and validity**

The following Graduation/Diploma requirements will take effect with the

Class of 2008 and subsequent classes:

- **Completion of an acceptable Graduation Portfolio**
- **Completion of Performance-Based Comprehensive Course Assessments (CCA)**
- **Successful completion of Twenty-five (25) Credits**
- **Participation in Grade 11 State Testing (New England Common Assessment**
- **Program – NECAP)**

STATE REQUIREMENT: Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements

As mandated by the State of Rhode Island, the faculty at Central Falls High School took

Careful consideration in choosing the following two methods for students to successfully applied learning:

#1 Portfolio Requirement:

Students must have a graduation portfolio demonstrating a proficiency of specific skills and competencies in order to receive a high school diploma. School-wide and department guidelines have been developed by grade for the portfolio requirements as described in the CFHS Portfolio Handbook. Throughout each school year, students and teachers will work collaboratively to assemble a portfolio of student work for their graduation portfolio. The graduation portfolio will contain a student's "best work" as it relates

to Central Falls High School's Learner Outcomes and RIDE determined Grades Span Expectation (GSE's). Academic credits alone are no longer sufficient for graduation purposes.

#2 Comprehensive Course Assessments Requirement:

All students are required to take comprehensive course assessments for each course at some point during each semester. These assessments will be at least 50% performance based and will be commonly scored. Material covered in these comprehensive course assessments will be a culmination of the material taught in each course and will be assessed using a rubric developed and scored collectively by teachers.

While students may pass a course without showing proficiency in the comprehensive course assessment, they will not be allowed to graduate until they have shown proficiency in the comprehensive course assessments related to the Grade 10 GSEs.

STATE REQUIREMENT: Proficiency in core content knowledge

A minimum of 25 credits is required for graduation as specified below. Course credits are based on daily work, portfolio tasks and comprehensive course assessments. Central Falls High School's core content requirements for graduation are as follows:

Subject: Number of Credit Required to Graduate 2008

English 4

Science 3

Mathematics 3*

Social Studies 3

Health & Phys Ed 2

Arts 2

Keyboarding/Portfolio 1

Electives 7**

Total 25

*** 4th year Math or Math-related credit required**

**** Three (3) of the seven (7) electives must be a combination of Applied Technology, Business Technology, and/or Foreign Language courses.**

STATE REQUIREMENT: Participation in Grade 11 State NECAP Testing

- All students must participate in the state assessments for English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science**
- Each student's results from NECAP tests will count toward graduation, but never enough to prevent a student from graduating**
- Students unsuccessful on the state assessments will have ample opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in all core subjects, using**

evidence-based proofs of proficiency, like course assessments, projects, portfolios, and performances

TRANSFERS & GRADUATION APPEALS

TRANSFERS

In order to receive a Central Falls High School Diploma, students who transfer from another school or another country, or have any other extenuating circumstances, will have their transcripts reviewed to determine if any modifications in course, grade level, credit, or PBGR requirements are warranted.

APPEALS

Portfolio Appeal Process

“....a student that fails his/her graduation portfolio must be offered an opportunity to redo the component(s) that were failed. However, if a school has done all it can to support the student, has offered the student multiple opportunities to learn and practice his/her skills, has communicated clearly and carefully with all advisors, mentor, parents/guardians, has provided an opportunity to resubmit failed elements, and the student still does not pass, the student’s diploma shall be withheld.”

The Rhode Island department of Education, Portfolio Toolkit

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the Graduation Portfolio Review Committee (GPRC). As the portfolio is a demonstration of proficiency of the Central Falls High School Learner Outcomes and RIDE determined GSE's, any student who does not possess a completed, acceptable portfolio will not receive their high school diploma regardless of how many academic credits they have earned.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the GPRC if they feel their portfolio meet the school's requirements set forth in the handbook. To appeal the decision of the GPRC the student must submit a formal letter to the portfolio coordinator and the principal of their appeal.

Graduation Appeal Process:

Graduation appeal decisions shall be the responsibility of the principal in consultation with members of the professional staff including guidance counselors. Parents will be notified of graduate/non-graduate status by submitting a written request for a hearing with the principal and appropriate staff. Results of the hearing may then be appealed through a written request for another hearing with the Superintendent of schools.

XI. Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado and seconded by Mr. David Cruise. The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.